





NEW ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON, ONT.

Ontario Historical Society  
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## PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE

**Rt. Rev. John Walsh, D. D.**

BISHOP OF LONDON.

JOHN—by the Grace of God and the appointment of the Holy See, BISHOP OF LONDON.

*To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese Health and Benediction in the Lord.*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

You are doubtless aware that we have at length proposed building a Cathedral in this city of London, for the glory of God, the honour of the Church, and for the purposes of our holy religion. We have already begun the work, having built the foundation at a cost of six thousand dollars. Although for several years past we keenly felt the need of a cathedral, still we postponed commencing its construction in the conviction that it would be more prudent to wait until such time as the various missions of the diocese would be sufficiently supplied with priests and churches to meet their spiritual wants and to promote the sacred interests of religion in their midst. We thank God that such is the case at present. The building of a suitable Cathedral is a most serious undertaking and will task to the utmost limits your generosity and means, but it is an unavoidable necessity, and with the blessing and assistance of God and your united and hearty co-operation, the task, though extremely arduous and presenting formidable difficulties, is not however beyond the financial capacity of the diocese or your power of accomplishing it.

Faith can remove mountains, and your faith in God and your love for His holy Church will enable you to remove the mountains of difficulties that may beset this work, and will urge you to accomplish wonders of labour and self-sacrifice in erecting in this city a splendid Cathedral, which will be in some measure not unworthy of the Divine Majesty, and will be to future generations a noble and enduring monument of your faith and piety. For this is the light in which we should regard the proposed undertaking. We should look at it with the eyes of faith, and should enter on it solely for the glory of God, the honour of our holy religion and the salvation of our souls. In the language of Holy Writ, "The house which we desire to build is great, for our God is great above all Gods." 2 Par., II, 5. We purpose building a house, not for man, but for God; not for the material wants of the perishable body, but for the spiritual wants and necessities of the imperishable soul.

The Catholic Church is pre-eminently the house of God and the gate of heaven. It is the house of God because Christ, our beloved Redeemer, dwells therein in the great Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which He so strikingly manifests his desire to be with the children of men. When Moses, by the Divine command, undertook to construct the tabernacle for the purpose of divine worship, he called upon the people to contribute of their means to enable him to accomplish his holy undertaking. The Israelites responded to the call made upon them with such alacrity and generosity, they were so zealous for the work and so prodigal of their means for the carrying of it out to a successful issue, that Moses felt compelled to restrain their zeal and to forbid any further gifts. "Both men and women," says the Scripture, "gave bracelets and earrings, rings and tablets and vessels of gold. If any man had violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine linen, and metal of silver and brass, they offered it to the Lord. And the skilful women also gave such things as they had spun. And the princes offered onyx stones

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and precious stones. All, both men and women, with devout mind offered gifts that the work might be done which the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses." Exodus xxxv. Now the tabernacle of Moses was but the mere type and shadow of the Catholic temple. It contained the tables of the law, the rod of Aaron and the loaves of Proposition. The Catholic temple contains in His Eucharistic presence God, the author of the law; it enshrines Christ himself, who fills it with the majesty of His adorable presence. The tabernacle contained a vessel of the manna that was showered from the heavens for the sustenance of the chosen people in their passage through the desert; the Catholic temple contains the true bread from heaven, the bread of life, of which they who partake may not die. "Your fathers," said Christ to the Jews, "did eat manna in the desert, and they died; he that eateth this bread shall live forever; and the bread which I will give you is my flesh for the life of the world. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day." St. John vi. Now the Church is the treasure-house of this divine and life-giving bread—it is the paradise in which grows this tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; it is the earthly house of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose delight is to be with the children of men.

When Solomon had dedicated the great temple which he had built to the honour of the true God, the Lord said to him, "I have sanctified this house which thou hast built to put my name there for ever, and my eyes and my heart shall be there always." 3 Kings, iv. But our Blessed Redeemer dwells corporally in our churches. Not only His blessed name, but He Himself is always there, and his eyes and his adorable and loving heart are there day and night to see the wants and miseries of His people, and to grant them mercy, grace and pardon.

The temple in the olden dispensation was a place of sacrifice. On its altars was offered up the blood of animals to

acknowledge God's supreme dominion over us, to propitiate his justice and to deprecate his wrath. On Calvary's hill, Jesus Christ offered himself, once for all, in a bloody manner, to satisfy the justice of God for our sins; to redeem mankind from the curse and the guilt of the Fall, and restore them their lost spiritual privileges. But the merits of the atonement of Calvary must be applied to our individual souls; and so Jesus instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass—the sacrifice of His body and blood to continue and represent the sacrifice of the Cross; to give God infinite honour and glory, and to apply to our souls the saving merits of His sufferings and death. On every Catholic altar Jesus Christ offers Himself daily by the hands of his priests, in a mystic manner. In this sacrifice He offers to His eternal Father, in our behalf, His body and blood, soul and divinity, in an unbloody manner, and thus gives infinite honour and glory to God. In this sacrifice the blood of Jesus is offered up for the remission of our sins, it is offered up as a thanksgiving for mercies and graces received; it is offered up to plead at the divine mercy-seat for all the graces and blessings which we need; it is offered up to apply to our souls the merits of that great atonement which blotted out the hand-writing of death that was against us, and purchased us with a great price.

The holy Mass is most certainly the most dread and august mystery in our holy religion. The sacrifices of the old law were but figures and shadows of the good things to come; the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a most blessed and merciful reality. When we consider the infinite value of the victim offered, the unapproachable and essential holiness of Jesus Christ the high priest who offers it; the infinite honour and glory it gives to God, the untold and inestimable blessings it communicates to man; the peace, and light and refreshment it brings to the souls in Purgatory, we can only bow down in humblest adoration before God, and earnestly thank Him for His infinite goodness for having given His church this great and sublime sacrifice, and exclaim in a transport of



love and wonder with St. Paul, "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God. How incomprehensible are His judgments and unsearchable His ways." Romans xi, 33. Now the Catholic temple is the proper place for the oblation of this saving and tremendous sacrifice, and it is for this purpose that it is primarily intended and built. Everything in a Catholic Church has reference to the Sanctuary, the Sanctuary has reference to the altar, and the altar to the august sacrifice that is offered upon it; so that it is it, and it alone, that gives a meaning and a value to the style and beauty and all the glory of Catholic ecclesiastical architecture and ceremonial.

The Catholic Church is for us the house of God and the gate of heaven, because it is there, principally and usually, the great ordinances instituted by Christ, for our salvation and sanctification, are carried out. Christ perpetually lives and works in the Catholic temple for our salvation. In the sermons preached therein He is the abiding teacher; in the sacraments administered therein He constantly exercises the office of our Redeemer. In baptism He receives children into His holy communion, and incorporates them into His mystic body. In confirmation He strengthens and equips them for the christian conflict. In penance He pardons the repentant sinner and receives the prodigal son back again into his father's house. In the Eucharist He feeds the weary pilgrims of the world, the travellers through the desert of life, with the bread of heaven, and gives them strength to reach the promised land. In matrimony He blesses and sanctifies the nuptial union, and consecrates the human family as the foundation of christian society. In holy orders He ordains priests, blesses and sanctifies them and appoints them His ambassadors and the dispensers of His mysteries of grace. Into the church the poor dead body is brought by loving hands, and the holy sacrifice is offered up for the repose of the soul that is gone, and the *Requiem* and the *Libera* ascend in plaintive accents before God, pleading for pity and pardon,



and the last offices of religious respect and of christian charity are performed for it ere it is committed to the keeping of the grave.

Thus in all the relations of our spiritual life, in all the great events that make epochs in our history, in our joys and in our sorrows, the Catholic Church is for us the house of God, the gate of heaven and the soul's earthly Paradise.

Now it is the conviction that the Catholic temple is the house of God and the gate of heaven, that it is the home of the Blessed Sacrament, the place where the great saving ordinances of the christian religion are administered, the holy place whence those fountains of the Saviour, the holy Sacraments, send abroad the waters of life for the spiritual regeneration and salvation of man, and that it contains the altar on which the august sacrifice of the Mass is offered up for the living and dead, this is the conviction, we repeat, that in every age has induced Catholics to make the greatest sacrifices in building and beautifying churches, and in showing their love for the beauty of God's house and the place where His glory dwelleth.

It was this belief that laid the foundations and raised the superstructures of the immortal old cathedrals of Europe, that have been well defined as "frozen music." It was it that inspired all the arts that have adorned those glorious and imperishable creations of Catholic faith and Catholic genius. Architecture unapproachable in beauty and perfection; stained glass windows that like the heavens announced the glory of God, and in all the varied colours of the rainbow, emblazoned the images of Christ and his saints; sacred music that seemed but the echo of the heavenly strains which rejoice the blest, that swept all the cords of human feeling and emotion, now melting the soul into sorrow and compunction, now subduing it as if with the dread presence of the divine majesty it invoked, and anon lifting it up on the wings of hope and in transports of joy to heaven; painting that made the canvass breathe and live; sculpture that took the rough stones of

the quarry and chiseled them into life; engraving, embroidery, the arts of the gold and silversmith and of the lapidary—all the gifts of human genius inspired by faith were employed by our Catholic ancestors to adorn the house of God, to embellish the sanctuary and the altar, to dignify Catholic worship and express their profound adoration and their ardent love of their crucified Lord, offered up in a mystic manner in the august sacrifice of the new law.

But not only did our Catholic forefathers—the men of the ages of faith—offer their gifts and lavish their means in the construction and adornment of the house of God, but they gave their time and, as it were, expended their lives in the great and holy work. Old and young, gentle and simple, the monk and the layman, the prince and the labourer, the baron and his retainer, the high-born dame and the peasant woman, all worked gratuitously for years in the construction of their churches. It was to them a labour of faith and love undertaken for Christ's dear sake, for the love of His Blessed Mother, and for the salvation of their souls. Hear a bishop of the Middle Ages on this subject. Hugues, the Bishop of Rouen, writing to Thierry, Bishop of Amiens, goes on to say:—

“The inhabitants of Chartres have generously agreed to concur in the construction of their Cathedral, by transporting the building materials. Our Lord recompensed their humble zeal by miracles which prompted the Normans to imitate the piety of their compatriots.

“Our Diocesans, having received the episcopal sanction and benediction, repaired without delay, to Chartres for the accomplishment of their vow.

“Since that date the faithful of our Diocese, and neighbouring parishes, have organized associations for the same purpose. Admission is only accorded to those persons who have had recourse to the holy tribunal of Penance, renounced all animosity and revenge, and become reconciled with their enemies.

"That accomplished, they proceed to elect a chief, under whose direction they convey their loaded vehicles in silence and humility.

"The conditions requisite for obtaining admittance into these associations are particularly remarkable in powerfully contributing to entertain amicable relations at a period when every province and district evinced hostile views towards each other. When notified that a church was to be built, the zealous members flocked from all the neighboring provinces, after receiving the blessing of their bishop, and went to work with incredible alacrity.

"However, these individuals who voluntarily engaged to labor in the construction of churches, had no knowledge of architecture; they evidently followed the guidance of the various architects who must have been very numerous at the time when christians vied with one another in erecting sacred edifices, namely, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

"Every association had a superintendent, who employed each member according to his strength and ability. Some were hewers of stone and sculptors of columns and statues, others cutters and fashioners of timber, makers of cement and trowel-carriers, were engaged in transporting building materials and provisions.

"It was an astonishing spectacle to behold military officers, the noble, the wealthy, the devotee of pleasure, assist in drawing and loading the wagons, and in a spirit of penance, assuming the garb and accomplishing the work of ordinary menials. What was still more surprising, was the harmony, submission and religious silence that prevailed in these extensive factories, where so many persons were congregated, far more fitted to command than to obey.

"Ecclesiastics set the example, by delivering pious exhortations calculated to encourage the associates to penance, and to labor more effectually for the glory of God.

These salutary instructions were diversified by the singing of hymns in honor of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints.

It was a veritable prodigy, said Haimon, to see gentlemen of rank and talent, accustomed to a soft and luxurious life, transporting stone, lime and every other requisite for the construction of the House of God. Sometimes a thousand persons, men and women, aid in drawing one wagon, so considerable is the weight, and yet silence reigns so perfectly that not a murmur is audible. When a halt occurs on the road, edifying conversations are held, during which the priests deem it a duty to treat of the pardon of injuries. Should anyone be found to disregard their injunctions, he is immediately dismissed from membership.

"During the night lighted tapers are burned on the conveyances, while sacred canticles are sung to while away the hours of the holy vigil."

Such was the faith, such the motives that wrought those miracles in stone—the churches and cathedrals of the middle ages.

And indeed, dearly beloved brethren, have we not witnessed the operation of a like faith and kindred motives on this continent in modern times, and the marvels which they have wrought? In this country we had no royal convert like a Constantine, or a Clovis, to build our churches; no government reached out its arm to help in this great work. To the hard-worked sons of toil, the glory and the merit of raising temples to the God of their fathers have been reserved. The poor labouring men who dug our canals and built our railroads, and hewed down our forests, laid also the foundations of our dioceses and of our churches. The alms of the poor, the wages of the mechanic, the scanty earnings of the servant maids, the tardy gains of the farmer and of the shopkeeper, these were the means that built our churches in our cities, towns and villages, in the prairies of the west, amid the half-felled forests, and along the shores of our great lakes and rivers. And as long as these churches shall stand, as long as their open doors will invite the weary and heavy-burdened to seek refreshment of soul within their

precincts, as long as the cross shall gleam from their steeples, an emblem of the everlasting covenant of divine mercy and pardon between the Redeemer and the redeemed, so long shall they be enduring monuments of the faith, and hope and charity of the apostolic people who planted the mustard seed of the Catholic faith in this country, and watered it with their sweat and tears until it has grown up into a mighty tree overshadowing the whole land.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, we earnestly invite you to share in this great and meritorious work, by helping to build our projected Cathedral. Its construction is an urgent necessity, and could not, with due regard to the honour of our religion and of the diocese, be postponed any longer, else it would not be undertaken now. The people of London will make the greatest sacrifices in order to push forward the good work, but they are neither wealthy nor numerous, and of themselves would be quite incapable to carry it out to completion. We know your work and the sacrifices you have made to build up churches and schools in the various missions of the diocese; but we are convinced that you can greatly help us without in the least interfering with local calls or wants. A small sum given each year by every family in the diocese, would certainly not be oppressive, whilst, in the aggregate, it would amount to a considerable sum, and would be of the greatest possible assistance to us. Besides, the Cathedral has claims on every Catholic within our jurisdiction. It is the mother church of the diocese, the centre whence radiates ecclesiastical jurisdiction throughout its whole extent. It is the seat of the Bishop, who is appointed by the Holy Ghost to rule the church of God within prescribed limits; the church in which the holy oils are consecrated and in which priests are ordained, and whence they are commissioned to preach the word of God, and to exercise their sublime functions as ambassadors of Christ and dispensers of His mysteries.

Hence, in every country where there exists no legal connection between church and state, the diocesan Cathedral is

invariably built by the united efforts of the diocese. We do not know a single exception to this rule. Even in wealthy New York, every mission in the diocese had to contribute for years a fixed annual sum towards the erection of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Hence, in asking our diocesans to contribute unitedly and generously towards the construction of our Cathedral, we are asking nothing which the bishops of the christian world have not asked and obtained under similar circumstances. We therefore confidently appeal to our beloved clergy, and the faithful and ever-generous laity of the diocese, to come unanimously to our help in our great and arduous undertaking. You have never yet failed us in any call we felt obliged to make upon you in the interests of religion, and we feel confident you will not fail us now. The Cathedral is a necessity, it is the work of God; it is undertaken solely for the glory of the adorable Trinity, for the interest of our holy religion, for the honour of the diocese, and for the salvation of souls. Let not selfishness, narrow-mindedness, avidity, or any other unworthy motive, prevent any from helping in this diocesan work. These things have never yet raised a monument to God, or achieved anything great or noble in the world; they are only powerful for mischief and for retarding or preventing the success of a good cause. But rather let generosity, nobility of soul, the love of God and of our holy religion, be the motives that will animate you and guide your conduct in relation to this great undertaking.

Let us, therefore, in God's holy name, go to work. Let us build this much-needed Cathedral for the honour of God and His Blessed Mother, and as a monument of our holy faith. We shall have a share in the merit of every act of religion performed in it. Every stone and brick built into its walls will be a prayer for us to God. Every holy Mass offered therein will plead with the irresistible voice of the precious blood, before the divine mercy seat, for pardon of our sins. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will abundantly bless and reward all who will have helped to raise this temple to His



Eucharistic Presence, during the long years that He will condescend to abide therein. Every Sacrament administered within its walls will contain blessings for us. Every sigh that will escape from the contrite, broken heart bowed down before its altars, will pierce the clouds, and will be heard in our behalf by Him who despises not the humble and contrite heart. Every poor erring child of God, won back from his evil ways and reconciled to his Heavenly Father within this church, will be an irresistible plea for our eternal salvation, for he who helps "to convert a sinner from the error of his ways will save his own soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins." St. James v, 20. And when we are no more, when our very memories will have perished, this church, with its ministrations, will be a perpetual remembrance for us before God; will be a constant *requiem* for our poor souls, and will, let us humbly trust, be a source of holy joy to us amid the glories and happiness of heaven.

We leave to the good will and discretion of our beloved clergy, the manner of raising an annual contribution for the purpose indicated. The sum to be contributed by each mission has already, for the most part, been agreed upon between the bishop and clergy. The contributions of each mission, with the names of the contributors and the sum paid by each, will be acknowledged in the columns of the CATHOLIC RECORD.

We solemnly promise and engage to cause a High Mass to be celebrated on the first Friday of every month, for the space of ten years, for the temporal and eternal welfare of the benefactors of the new Cathedral. The celebration of the aforesaid Mass will begin on the first Friday of the month following its dedication. We request of the Reverend clergy to make this fact well known to their people, and to explain the great spiritual favours to be gained thereby.

Finally, as the Holy Ghost assures us—"that unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it," (Psalm cxxvi.), we solemnly place this undertaking under the

protection of God, humbly beseeching Him to bless and to prosper it.

We most earnestly beseech our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the true omnipotent God, the splendour and the image of the Eternal Father, and life eternal; who is the corner stone cut off from the mountain without hands, and the immovable foundation—who is the beginning and the end, to vouchsafe to bless this undertaking, and to be, Himself, the beginning, the growth, and the consummation of this work, which is begun to the praise and glory of His name.

We place it under the powerful patronage of the ever Blessed Virgin, the first patron of the diocese; of St. Patrick, its second patron, and of St. Peter, the patron of the Cathedral, imploring them to help us by their powerful intercession, and to obtain for all the friends and benefactors of this work the grace that they may be, one day, living stones “of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the blessed vision of peace, which,” as the Church sings, “towers aloft to the stars—*de viventibus saxis.*”

In order to obtain the divine favour and assistance through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, in this arduous undertaking, we ordain that the Litany of Loretto shall, until further notice, be publicly recited by the pastor and congregation of each mission, immediately after the Parish Mass, on Sundays.

May the peace and blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, descend upon, and abide with you always, dearly beloved brethren.

This Pastoral shall be read in all the churches of the diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception, and on the succeeding Sunday, or Sundays, in those missions which contain more churches than one.

Given at St. Peter's Palace, London, on the Feast of St. Patrick, 17th March, A.D., 1881.

† JOHN WALSH,

Bishop of London.

By order of His Lordship  
WILLIAM O'MAHONY, Secretary. }